1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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CHAPTER I

INTEREST IN CATTLE

I

233 [241] A PEOPLE whose material culture is as simple as that of the Nuer are highly dependent on their environment. They are pre-eminently pastoral, though they grow more millet and maize than is commonly supposed. Some tribes cultivate more and some less, according to conditions of soil and surface water and their wealth in cattle, but all alike regard horticulture as toil forced on them by poverty of stock, for at heart they are herdsmen, and the only labour in which they delight is care of cattle. They not only depend on cattle for many of life's necessities but they have the herdsman's outlook on the world. Cattle are their dearest possession and they gladly risk their lives to defend their herds or to pillage those of their neighbours. Most of their social activities concern cattle and *cherchez la vache* is the best advice that can be given to those who desire to understand Nuer behaviour.[1]

The attitude of Nuer towards, and their relations with, neighbouring peoples are influenced by their love of cattle and their desire to acquire them. They have profound contempt for peoples with few or no cattle, like the Anuak, while their wars against Dinka tribes have been directed to seizure of cattle and [423] control of pastures. Each Nuer tribe and tribal section has its own pastures and water-supplies, and political fission is closely related to distribution of these natural resources, ownership of which is generally expressed in terms of clans and lineages. Disputes between tribal sections are very often about cattle, and cattle are the compensation for loss of life and limb that is so frequently their outcome. Leopard-skin chiefs and prophets are arbiters in questions in which cattle are the issue, or ritual agents in situations demanding sacrifice of ox or ram. Another 233 ritual specialist is the *bull ghok*, the Man of the Cattle. Likewise, 561 in speaking of age-sets and age-grades we find ourselves des-

[1] Nuer interest in their cattle has been emphasized by early travellers in their country. *Vide* Marno, op. cit., p. 343; Werne, op. cit., p. 439; du Couret, op. cit., p. 82.

[p. 16]

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VII

In most years wild fruits, seeds, and roots are not an important item in Nuer diet. Their country is mainly treeless and fruits therefore few; only 'wild dates' (*Balanites aegyptiaca*), found in occasional patches to the west of the Nile and in more extensive stretches to the east, provide much sustenance. The fruits ripen from about January to March and both the kernels and their sweet fleshy covering are eaten. A number of other fruits are eaten, mainly by children. Initiated youths refuse most of them. The seeds and roots of water-lilies (*Nymphaea lotus*), which are found in pools and lagoons in the early dry season are much relished. The seeds of 'wild rice' (*Oryza Barthii*) are collected and a number of wild plants that grow on village sites are used as seasoning for porridge. In famine years much greater attention is paid to the wild harvest. 'Wild dates' are then a great stand-by and people eat a wide range of fruits, ripening mainly in the early part of the drought, which they neglect when hunger is not severe, and make use of bush-yams and the seeds of wild sorghum and other grasses.

VIII

It will have been noted that fishing, hunting, and collecting are dry-season occupations and produce during that season the necessary supplement to an insufficient milk diet. In the wet season, when these activities are no longer profitable and the milk yield tends to fall off, the heavy rains, which cause the changes responsible for these losses in supply, produce conditions suitable for horticulture, impossible in the drought, that will replace them. The variation in food-supply throughout the year and its sufficiency for life at all seasons is thus determined by the annual cycle of oecological changes. Without grain in the wet season Nuer would be in a parlous state; and since it can be stored they can, also, to a small extent, make provision against famine in the drought.

Climatic conditions together with flooding and the flatness of the country make it impossible to cultivate most Central African food plants in Nuerland, and the Nuer are especially unfortunate in having no root crop as a reserve in famine years.

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241 It may be doubted whether they could cultivate any crops other than those they now sow, without extensive irrigation in the dry season, and this is incompatible with their nomadism. These crops do not make an imposing list. The staple crop is millet (*Sorghum vulgare*), from which they reap two harvests, and they sow some maize near their huts and a few beans (*Vigna*), their only garden vegetable, among the millet. Besides these three food plants they cultivate a little tobacco under the eaves of their huts and plant some gourds to grow up kraal fences. The millet is consumed as porridge and beer; the maize is mainly roasted, though some is eaten as porridge; the beans are eaten stewed or cooked with porridge; the tobacco is used for smoking in pipes, as snuff, and for chewing; and the gourds are, according to their species, either eaten or fashioned into dairy vessels.

Millet, the main crop, is the only one of these plants to the cultivation of which we need make more than a passing reference. Once it is established it stands up well to conditions which would be fatal to most plants, and it is worthy of notice that wild species of sorghum flourish in this latitude. Maize is also hardy but, although it is important to Nuer because it is the first grain to be harvested when their supplies are running short or are exhausted, its quantity is negligible except on the banks of the Baro. Nuer distinguish between many types of millet, mainly by the colour of their seeds, and know which are early, and which late, varieties, in what order they ripen, which give good flour for porridge, and which have sweet stalks for chewing. The plant thrives in black clays which hold up water, but shows much adaptability and ripens also on the more sandy stretches on which the Nuer build their villages, though in such spots it has less resistance to drought and a second sowing is very uncertain. Eastern Jikany is probably the best millet country in Nuerland, and, although in many parts it is too flooded for a second crop, it is the only section I have seen which can generally be relied on to yield sufficient grain to support the population. Lak and Thiang tribal areas in the Zeraf Island, which I have not visited, are said to be good grain country.

Even millet will not flourish in standing water, so that the

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gardens have to be made on higher land. Where circumstances permit homesteads to be built over a wide stretch of country gardens can be made almost anywhere between them, but where they are strung out along a ridge there is less choice, for the back of the ridge is too hard, does not retain enough water, and is required for grazing. Cultivations are therefore made behind the huts and byres between the summit of the ridge and the sunken plain. Among the Western Nuer, in the higher parts where there is a slight slope, small dams are often constructed to prevent the water running from the gardens. If, on the contrary, the millet is likely to be flooded where the ridge slopes into the plain, drainage canals, sometimes several feet deep and over fifty yards in length, are dug to take excess of water into the bush. These gardens form a continuous line behind the homesteads and if there is sufficient land there for cultivation people do not cultivate elsewhere. If there is not enough land they cultivate along the ridge beyond the confines of the village where it is too damp for building but not too flooded for millet gardens, or in near-by forest.

There is enough land for everybody on the Nuer scale of cultivation and consequently questions of tenure do not arise. It is taken for granted that a man has a right to cultivate the ground behind his homestead unless some one is already using it, and a man can choose any spot outside the village which is not occupied by the gardens of others. New-comers are always in some way related to some of the villagers, and kinsmen do not dispute about gardens. Moreover, owing to the conformation of Nuer villages, there is a rough correlation between the size of population and the area of cultivable land, for where suitable land is limited so is space for building.

It has been remarked that when once established millet shows great resistance to climatic variations. The difficulty is for it to become established. It frequently happens shortly after sowing that there is a short period of drought in which the young shoots wither and die. Sometimes this is due to the hungry people sowing too soon, but it is generally unavoidable, because if they wait too long before planting, the millet becomes subject to smut and neither bears nor ripens properly. It also frequently happens that heavy and violent rain destroys the

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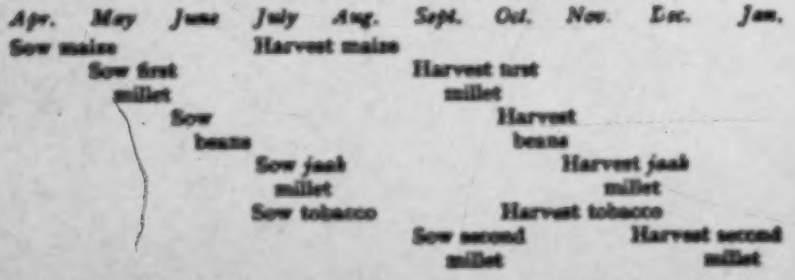
seedlings by beating them into the sticky clay or by washing the soil from their roots. I have not known a season in Nuerland in which drought or excessive rain did not in some measure destroy the crops after sowing. Elephants do much damage when the millet has passed the vulnerable seedling period and I have known the gardens of a village to be partially destroyed three years in succession by these beasts. Weaver-birds take an annual toll when the millet is ripening, but Nuer do nothing to scare them unless they are in such numbers that they threaten to consume the whole harvest, when they erect bird-watching platforms in the gardens. In some years—I do not know how often—the country is visited by locusts which cause immediate and wholesale destruction. At various stages of growth guinea-fowl, crows, ostriches, and some of the smaller antelopes do much damage, and waterbuck show a great liking for the second crop. Sometimes, though I think rarely, Nuer build huts in their gardens, if they are some way from the village, to guard the millet from these depredations, but generally they show little concern, hoping that the proximity of dwellings will keep animals away and, if it does not, accepting the consequences with a detachment that appears sometimes to be almost indifference.

HORTICULTURAL CALENDAR



The calendar shown above is an approximation, since the time of sowing and harvesting depends on the commencement of the first heavy rains, which is subject to annual variations. The horticultural season generally begins at the end of March for those who are able to spend the drought in or near their homes on river banks, but most people have to wait till they can return to their villages in April or May before they can start clearing their gardens. Married people usually return to their villages in the first half of

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241 221 May and start to prepare the ground around their homesteads for maize. At the end of the month, or in June, the younger people return with the cattle and assist in clearing last year's millet gardens and in the hard work of hoeing new ground. Prolific grasses spring up with the millet which has to be weeded at least three, and maybe four or five, times. The more weeding done for the first crop the less is needed for the second crop.

While the first crop is ripening adjacent strips are cleared for the second crop (Plate XI (*b*)), which is sown shortly before the first is harvested, at the end of August or in September, and it grows together with the new shoots that spring from the roots of the first crop after its stems have been chopped down. In Eastern Nuerland the second sowing is made among the standing crop or on an extension of the garden, but in Western Nuerland and in parts of the Zeraf Island the ground is so flooded that it is made on prepared mounds of earth. I would again draw attention to Plate XII, where these mounds are illustrated, for it admirably shows what Nuerland is like in the rains and conveys a clear impression of the obstacles confronting Nuer horticulture. The second crop has also to be weeded several times and, as the same garden will be used for the first sowing in the following rains, the more thoroughly it is weeded now the less work there will be to do then. In many parts of Nuerland the second harvest may be almost as big as the first, and it is probable that where local conditions are adverse to one crop they favour the other. It appears that while the sown millet of the second crop requires much moisture and will not flourish if the rains fall off early the millet which sprouts from the old stems does best in drier conditions and may be spoilt by late heavy showers, so that one or the other is likely to ripen, and in moderate conditions both may thrive.

[77] In some districts of the Lou and Eastern Jikany tribes the culture of a slow-maturing millet called *jaak* (*Sorghum durra*) has been copied from the Dinka. The spot chosen for cultivation is not burnt at the annual firing of the bush, but early in the following rains when the new grasses have sprung up among the old. Although this kind of millet has certain disadvantages it has caught on in a few places because it requires less clearing and weeding and is very hardy.

241 Nuer know nothing of crop rotation, having indeed no crops to rotate, nor of manures, though the droppings of cattle and the ashes of burnt weeds and brushwood no doubt act as fertilizers. They never allow their homestead gardens to lie fallow for a year to enable the soil to recuperate, but plant year

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241 after year till it is utterly exhausted, when they change their homestead site, often moving for some years to a new village. Nevertheless, they know that each year of tillage means further deterioration and judge the impoverishment of the soil by the size of the millet plants and of their yield and by the presence of certain weeds which only flourish on exhausted ground. A garden is cultivated annually for from five to ten years and after it has been left fallow for a few seasons it is tested to see whether the soil is still hard and caked, or loose, soft, and ready to bear a new crop. In gardens cultivated in bush sites away from the villages, on the other hand, people are not confined by the gardens of their neighbours, and it is possible to hoe a virgin piece of ground each year at one end and to abandon an exhausted piece at the other end.

241 262 Nuer gardens are very small. Measurements do not give so clear an idea of their size as noting that in an average year the people in most parts of Nuerland have just enough grain to last them till the following harvest, if they are very economical during the dry season and subsist mainly on milk and fish, while in a bad year they may have to go without porridge for [251] several weeks. Also it may be noted that Nuer do not build granaries, but find small grass and earthenware bins, kept in their huts, sufficient for storage. However, we may judge how important millet is to them less by its quantity than by its place in their total food-supply, for it is not merely a subsidiary item of diet of high nutritive value but is an essential food, since they would be hard pressed to maintain life without it. Nuer fully acknowledge that this is so and in no way despise horticulture, but are, on the whole, industrious gardeners.

241 Nevertheless, they consider that horticulture is an unfortunate necessity involving hard and unpleasant labour and not an ideal occupation, and they tend to act on the conviction that the larger the herd the smaller need be the garden. They are herdsmen and not peasants. When I have drawn attention to badly kept gardens or remarked that the crops received no protection from beasts and birds they have been unperturbed, for, while it would be disgraceful to neglect cattle, there are no strong feelings about inattention to gardens. When I have asked them why they do not sow more millet I have

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often received some such reply as: 'Oh well, such is our custom. We have cattle.'

I wish to emphasize, in conclusion, the following points: (1) that Nuer cultivate only enough grain for it to be one element in their food-supply and not enough to live on it alone; (2) that with their present climate and technology considerable increase in horticulture would be unprofitable; and (3) that the dominance of the pastoral value over horticultural interests is in accord with oecological relations which favour cattle husbandry at the expense of horticulture. Nuer values and oecological relations, therefore, combine to maintain the bias towards cattle husbandry, in spite of rinderpest having rendered it a more precarious occupation than hitherto.

IX

It has been mentioned that Nuer must have a mixed economy in the given oecological relations because no one source of food is sufficient to keep them alive, and that the dominant food-producing activity at each season is determined by the oecological cycle. The different elements of diet, therefore, have an oecologically determined relation to one another and these relations can be roughly plotted.

Milk foods, millet in the form of porridge and beer, a little maize, fish, and meat, are the main items of Nuer diet. Milk is a staple food all the year round, though cows probably tend to give a smaller yield towards the end of the rains owing to insufficiency of pasturage, and it is said that there is a tendency for them to calve in numbers after the first harvest and therefore to cease lactating a few weeks earlier—if this is correct it is possibly due to the hot weather in February and March bringing the cows on heat. This seasonal tendency and the respective contributions of cattle and millet to Nuer food-supply are brought out in a story in which Cow and Millet have a dispute. Cow says that Millet is a person of no importance and that it is her milk that keeps people alive throughout the year, while in time of famine they can eat her flesh and live. Millet replies that Cow's claims are doubtless just, but that when she is ripe the children are glad, for they chew the sweet stems and rub out the grain between their hands and eat it,

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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PLATE XI

a. Open savannah in the dry season (Lou)

b. Clearing millet garden for late sowing (Lou)

[Face p. 84]

8:Howell E. G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

131 361 el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal. The Leik and Bul tribes are nearly all on the left bank of the Bahr el Ghazal, although some of them move to grazing grounds across the river during the dry months of the year.

361 166 All Nuer are compelled to migrate during the dry season and to set up their cattle-camps near permanent water supplies and where the receding waters of the rivers leave green and succulent grass for their animals. At first their cattle-camps are widely distributed over the 'interim-diate' plains, but concentration increases as the season advances until, just before the break of the rains, in late January or February, all cattle are on the *toic*. The distances covered in these seasonal migrations vary considerably. Many of the Lak and Thieng Nuer, for example, move only a few miles from their permanent homes, while many of the Gaawar and Lou move eighty miles or more. These differences, however, have not affected the similarity of movements among the Nuer as a whole. The swing of the seasonal pendulum to and fro is common to all and the difference is one of distance only.

The permanent settlements of the Nuer are not concentrated like those of the Shilluk, Anuak, and some of the Dinka. A Nuer village generally consists of a number of domestic units, each having one or more cattle-byres and a few dwelling-huts, separated by distances varying from a few hundred yards to over a mile. This diffusion of dwelling-sites is partially caused by the nature of the ground, for land which is above the level of the floods is limited in most areas of Nuerland. It is, however, an inherent characteristic of the Nuer to set up his abode sufficiently far from his neighbours to emphasize and retain his individualism, yet sufficiently near to enjoy the privileges and economic advantages which neighbourhood brings. Cultivations are usually opened up in the area immediately surrounding the home-stead, both for convenience and for ease in protecting crops against the ravages of wild animals and straying cattle. Fencing is impossible except in woodland areas, and is in any case a laborious process, but apart from this consideration the Nuer seems to have an intense desire to see his cultivations round his home. When the ground becomes exhausted he will move his home to a new area rather than have his gardens a few hundred yards away from it. During the dry season the settlements are partially or completely abandoned according to whether permanent water is available or not and whether there is sufficient grain to keep the older and less active members of the community. The bulk of the population always moves with the cattle, and by February there are few people left in the villages except where grazing grounds are close enough for daily contact.

[241]

361 621 The distribution of population in Nuerland is determined by the physical conditions I have described. Communications during the rains are usually difficult, and local communities, large or small, are to

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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a greater or lesser extent isolated at certain times of the year. Such periodic isolation is one of the factors which tend to emphasize the distinction between social groups and strengthen the ties within them, for the people are compelled by territorial proximity to conform to an accepted pattern of behaviour. During the dry season, movements in the pasture areas are comparatively easy, but camps may be far apart and communications therefore tedious. The majority of people from a local community who occupy the same permanent settlement during the rains, tend to join together in the cattle-camps, and their relationship is therefore constant throughout the year. This is not, however, always the case, for people of different descent-groups, normally living together and assisting one another during the season of cultivation, may split up and join different cattle-camps during the summer. The way in which people join together and concentrate during the dry season is usually determined by kinship ties, or ties arising from common residence in the permanent settlements, though it need not be so. For example, the Lak Nuer are sometimes forced to move their cattle into Gaawar grazing areas because their own are insufficient to meet their needs in certain years. They do so by agreement with the Gaawar and graze their cattle there on sufferance. A closer analysis of the relations of Lak with Gaawar will usually show that some form of kinship relationship exists, or at least a relationship through intermarriage between the individual units concerned.

Climatic conditions adverse to the cultivation of millet coupled with widespread cattle disease (rinderpest, contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia, trypanosomiasis, &c.) make life extremely precarious. Nuer like to claim that a mixed economy is forced upon them, and that they would scarcely bother to cultivate at all if their cattle were sufficient. This is, I think, largely an ideal. Cattle, though subject to disease, provide a measure of security in an environment where poor drainage and erratic rainfall distribution make crop-production a most risky enterprise and famine a common event. They might well cultivate more energetically if the processes of agriculture were not so laborious and their efforts so often of little avail.

Small quantities of maize are planted in the early rains and the crop matures, if they are lucky, about the end of July, providing temporary relief until the first crop of millet is available. This crop matures a few weeks later, while a second crop is harvested in November or December and sometimes as late as January. During this period the rains may be favourable to both crops and the Nuer are well supplied. In most years, however, one or the other crop fails and in the worst years the early crop is late in starting owing to lack of rain only to be ruined by torrential downpours when it is reaching maturity, while the second crop is often destroyed by floods. In such circumstances the Nuer are short of food, and two unsuccessful years mean

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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241 132 famine. The distribution of rainfall is, however, not universally favourable or otherwise to all areas of Nuerland. Heavy rainfall in low-lying regions may prove fatal, while it is suitable for crops planted on better drained, sandier soil. Thus crops are not as a rule universally good or bad throughout Nuerland, nor within one tribal territory. Some families have good crops, others bad, and the position may be reversed in another year.

621 On a wider scale this leads to trading or a reaffirmation of more remote obligations of kinship; on a limited scale it leads to a re-emphasis of the ties of mutual assistance which are raised both by kinship and by association in a common territory. Economic considerations of this sort are important in the determination and maintenance of social groupings and in the maintenance of peaceful relations. This is a feature of Nuer society which has been at least partially modified by modern administrative methods since grain is often imported and sold in years of shortage.

The other principal factor making for social integration is the need for common defence against opposing groups or, in a much wider sense, defence against foreign aggression. It is obviously another factor which is most readily affected by modern influences and the introduction of an ordered administration. The need for mutual defence is lessened, and doubtless the feeling of opposition to an alien government is less intense now that the Nuer are used to it.

Whatever the factors making for social integration or the reverse, the pattern which extends within and across social groupings is the kinship system, both as a fact and as an ideal. The smaller the social unit the more important these factors are and the greater the need for mutual assistance and co-operation. Later we shall come to examine in greater detail how these factors have altered through normal contacts with other peoples and through the active policy of the Government, and in particular the resulting effect on legal concepts and procedures.

Social and Political Structure

114 Professor Evans-Pritchard has recorded a full analysis of the political and kinship systems of the Nuer. For the purpose of this work, which aims at the examination of legal processes and procedures in the present and to a lesser extent in the past, it is unnecessary to do more than summarize his observations and conclusions which, with the exception of minor local variations of no great importance in the general picture, are much the same as my own. Where I use examples, I often refer to the Zeraf Valley tribes, Gaawar, Thiang, and Lak, which Professor Evans-Pritchard has not studied. There is therefore some object in this summary, apart from its necessity as an introduction to the subject of law, since it provides further evidence from other parts

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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262 to part with some of his dura. So want is never far from
437 the door of the Nuer home.

273 A drink—more or less intoxicating, according to the amount one drinks of it—is made from dura. Nuer are very fond of it. They frequently get intoxicated enough to fight when they have had their fill of it.

THE NUER IN BUSINESS

● 241 Few Nuer men engage in any business that helps others. Practically every Nuer man has a plot of ground where he may raise the family's supply of dura, but he seldom thinks of raising any to sell.

The Government has tried to interest the Nuer in raising cotton, but with no marked success so far.

326 A few men are blacksmiths and make the spears, fishing spears, and ornaments out of iron, brass, or wire. They sharpen old hoes, spears and such like, and make good money in this line. The equipment a blacksmith requires is decidedly meagre. A piece of iron to hammer on, a piece of iron to hammer with, and a fire, constitute the usual equipment, although one occasionally sees a chisel.

342 Some men make a reputation for themselves by their skill as roofers. The roof of a Nuer house when new is a very pretty piece of work, being quite smooth and even. It takes a good roofer to fix a roof so that the heavy tropical rains do not go through it. Men roof the houses, but the making of the long grass eaves to protect the wall from rain is considered as women's work and is left for them to do.

325 Women sometimes make earthen pots and sell or
458 trade them to others who are not so well versed in this art, but practically all women are more or less proficient in pottery.

15: Butt E-4 (No date) 1952 F J22 Nuer F J22

features characteristic of the areas occupied by the majority of the Nilotes - flatness, heavy clay soil, thick, tall grasses, swamp in the wet season and parched, brown stubble in the dry season. It is an area of true savannah.

The influence of environment on Nuer economy is profound. Although cattle form the great interest of the Nuer people, and are important socially as well as economically, horticulture is a necessary part of their economy owing to the prevalence of cattle diseases and the difficulties of obtaining adequate pastures in the dry season. Horticulture and cattle herding are, therefore, the two main economic activities, and together they determine the ecological cycle, as well as the distribution of population, village sites, and also the relationships between the various segments into which the Nuer are divided.

Nuer villages are situated on elevated ground out of reach of the wet season floods. In the early rains the cattle feed on young shoots near the village but, as the vegetation becomes too rank and the waters rise, the herds have to graze off the short grasses of the village ridges. During the wet season millet and other grains, vegetables and tobacco are grown in the gardens situated behind the homesteads. At the end of the rains, in November, the floods begin to recede. When the tall, tough grasses, which are unsuitable for the cattle to eat, are sufficiently dry they are burned. Since some varieties send up shoots a few days later, the cattle have fresh pasture until the height of the dry season when the water supplies fail in many regions. The Nuer then seek the permanent water-courses and dry-season pastures. When the harvests are finished they move from the villages to the dry-season camps; a period of wandering divides the two periods of stable residence. The dry-season camps are situated on the banks of rivers which do not completely dry up or on the edge of permanent swamps.

When the rains begin again in April and May, water and pasture become plentiful and a move is made back to the villages above flood level, in order to prepare the ground for cultivation.

The annual cycle is approximately set out below. It has considerable repercussions on social life and, although local conditions may cause some variation, the principles underlying the annual cycle are the same everywhere in Nuerland.

November - December. Youths and girls take cattle to camps while the old people remain in the village to harvest the second millet crop. Fishing camps may be formed on the banks of rivers. When the second harvest is finished the cattle are brought back to eat the millet stalks but as the pastures become exhausted all eventually go to occupy new cattle camps. A period of wandering precedes the final settlement in the camp.

January - February. The married people join the youths when they settle in the final camping grounds. Camps get larger and larger as pastures become shorter and more people join existing camps. Different villages and tribal sections tend to move at about the same time and to visit the same pools so that the sites of the main dry-season camps do not change from year to year.

15: Butt E-4 (No date) 1952 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

221 *March - April.* When the rains begin the old people return to the village for sowing.

241

233 *June.* The rest of the people follow with the cattle. The move from camp to village is direct, whereas in the move from village to camp there is an intervening period of wandering.

The Nuer year is therefore divided into two parts, consisting of a period in the villages and a period in the camp. This annual transhumance is necessary for the very existence of the Nuer. Rinderpest prevents complete dependence on cattle, so that they must have villages on highlands, with gardens, in order to grow the necessary supplies of grain. Climatic conditions prevent complete reliance on cultivation and the need of fresh pastures and water for the cattle forces them into dry-season camps near permanent supplies.

361 Homesteads may be strung out along sandy ridges with gardens at the back and grazing in front and the location and size of the villages depend on the distribution and extent of the higher ground suitable for cultivation. The direction of the dry-season movements are determined by ecological conditions. Transhumance enhances the importance of units larger than the villages which, for economic reasons, cannot easily maintain a self-sufficient isolation as do the Shilluk, Anuak, Acholi and Lango villages where the emphasis is on cultivation.

ECONOMY

The economic importance of cattle to the Nuer

231 Economically, cattle are chiefly important for milk and milk products,
242 such as whey and liquid cheese. We are told that the Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they give.

Nuer eat meat boiled and roasted but, although they are particularly fond of it, they do not raise cattle for slaughter. It is considered that people ought not to kill cattle solely for food and, except on sacrificial and special occasions with a ritual aspect, the Nuer refrain from doing so. It is even thought that animals killed specifically for food might curse their owners.

Like other pastoral peoples in East Africa, the Nuer extract blood from the necks of their cattle and use it as a supplementary article of
[285] diet in dry season camps. The blood is boiled and taken with porridge as flavouring or is allowed to coagulate into a block which is roasted and then cut in slices.

287 Milk, meat and blood are the food products derived from cattle but the herds also furnish the materials for implements and other necessary articles. Skins are used for sleeping on, for trays, for carrying fuel, making cord for tethering, leather collars for oxen and in making pipes, spears and shields. Tail hairs are used for ornamentation, bones and horns are used for instruments, scrapers and hammers. Cattle dung is used for plastering walls and floors of huts; dried dung is used for fuel and